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INL upgrades emergency communication service

IDAHO FALLS — Idaho National Laboratory is establishing an emergency communication solution for the Department of Energy's Idaho site.

This new and innovative radio service will not only support the emergency communication needs of the lab, but will seamlessly integrate with emergency responders locally and across Idaho. And it will encourage regional participation in national events.

"The goal is to provide reliable communications between the responders in the field, those coordinating the operations and any other involved agencies," said Tony Pascavage, director of INL Delivery Assurance and Information Services.

INL responders, local, state and DOE partners worked together on the acquisition of an advanced communication platform for emergency response at INL. The lab is working with counties to update mutual-aid agreements that enable INL emergency responders to work with authorities from counties across the area to mitigate events such as accidents on the highway and wildfires. Interoperability between agencies is a fairly recent concern — most local systems were based on each agency having its own autonomous radio system.

"The situation in the field can change very quickly," said INL Fire Chief Eric Gossweiler. "Our ability to communicate those changes and challenges rapidly can make a huge difference in our coordination of effort and ability to respond to an incident safely."

"White Cloud Communications is proud to be awarded the INL Emergency Communication contract," said Joe Shelton, White Cloud chief executive officer. This is a provided-service contract where INL pays a fixed rate for unlimited communication. INL responders will have new state-of-the-art portables, in-vehicle systems and new dispatch consoles throughout the facility. Mutual-aid agencies will have full access to this network.

"We have the experience and ability to provide the INL a complete turnkey solution to upgrade their technology," Shelton said. "Our support of its (Idaho National Laboratory) communications infrastructure means responders can focus on saving lives and protecting property."

White Cloud Communications, a 63-year-old Idaho-based company, will maintain the infrastructure and make necessary equipment upgrades.

INL is one of the DOE's 10 multiprogram national laboratories. The laboratory performs work in each of DOE's strategic goal areas: energy, national security, science and environment. INL is the nation's leading center for nuclear energy research and development. Day-to-day management and operation of the laboratory is the responsibility of Battelle Energy Alliance.

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